CALIFORNIA WILDLIFE HABITAT RELATIONSHIPS SYSTEM
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CALIFORNIA INTERAGENCY WILDLIFE TASK GROUP
Database Version 8.1 (2005)

B178 Black Turnstone Arenaria melanocephala
Family: Scolopacidae Order: Charadriiformes Class: Aves

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

Common to abundant on rocky shores of marine habitats along the entire California coast (and on offshore islands) from late July to early May (Cogswell 1977, McCaskie et al. 1979, Garrett and Dunn 1981). Not as abundant in winter as in fall and spring seasons (Page et al. 1979). Small numbers of nonbreeders remain through the summer. Partial to rugged, rocky, intertidal coasts, but also occurs on outer coast sandy beaches and on estuarine mudflats. Often the most common of wintering, rocky intertidal shorebirds. A few inland records exist, mostly from the Salton Sea (Garrett and Dunn 1981).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Feeds by probing in the substrate, and by using the bill to tip over small rocks, kelp, and other objects to obtain prey underneath. Diet on the breeding grounds has not been studied in depth (Johnsgard 1981), although known to take heath berries (Bent 1929). Observed feeding on racks of drying salmon. In rocky intertidal habitats in nonbreeding season, probes among barnacle and mussel beds for small crustaceans and mollusks (Bent 1929).

Cover: Requires undisturbed areas above tidal water for roosting during high tide.

Reproduction: Nests along the west coast of Alaska on wet, grassy tundra, near pond edges or on small islets. The sparsely lined nest is merely a depression in the ground or on flattened grass (Bent 1929).

Water: No additional information found.

Pattern: Wet, grassy tundra habitats are used for nesting. In nonbreeding season, frequents rocky intertidal areas along marine outer coast.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Fall migration along coastal central California begins in mid-July and apparently peaks during August. Spring migration begins as early as late February, but does not reach maximum until April (Page et al. 1979); the latest spring migrants depart by mid-May. Northward migrants may travel for some distance over open ocean (Bent 1929). Large numbers winter in California, but only a few remain through the summer.

Home Range: No information found on home range or nest density, although in some

areas may nest semicolonially (Johnsgard 1981).

Territory: No data found.

Reproduction: Little information is available on reproductive biology. Nesting season begins on the west coast of Alaska in early May (Gill and Handel 1981). Both sexes share incubation of about 21 days. The precocial young leave the nest within several hr of hatching. Young probably fly a tabout same time as ruddy turnstone (19 days) (Johnsgard 1981).

Niche: Aggressively defends spot where foraging (Ehrlich et al. 1988).

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